The
COWLEY FATHERS

WORKS OF THE SOCIETY OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

The American Congregation

The Home Province

The Monastery of St Mary and St John, 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Mass.
The Mission House, 33 Bowdoin Street, Boston, Mass.
Church of St John the Evangelist, Bowdoin Street, Boston, Mass.
Church of St Augustine and St Martin, 31 Lenox Street, Boston, Mass.

The Province of Japan

St Michael's Monastery, Oyama, Tochigi Ken, Japan.
Church of the Transfiguration, Nikko, Japan.
St Hanna's Sanitarium, Haruna, Japan.
St John's House, Tokyo.

The English Congregation

The Home Province

The Mission House, Marston Street, Oxford, England.
Church of St John the Evangelist, Iffley Road, Oxford.
The Cowley-St John Schools, Oxford
St Edward's House, 22 Great College Street, London S.W. 1.

The Indian Province

The Mission House and Churches, Poona, India.

The South African Province

The Mission House, Church and outlying Missions, St. Cuthbert's, Tsolo, C. P., South Africa.

The Canadian Congregation

The Mission House, Bracebridge, Ontario.
Collegiate Church of St John the Evangelist, Bracebridge.
The Muskoka Missions.

The
COWLEY FATHERS

THE object of this pamphlet is to give information to the many who make inquiries as to the history, object and aim of the Society of St John the Evangelist, commonly known as the Cowley Fathers, and to explain briefly something of the duties of a Religious in the Society.

MONASTERY OF ST MARY AND ST JOHN
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

1964

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RICHARD MEUX BENSON, S.S.J.E.

THE FATHER FOUNDER

The COWLEY FATHERS

BEGINNINGS

IN 1865, Richard Meux Benson, Charles Chapman Grafton, and Simeon Wilberforce O'Neill began to live together in a house in the district of Cowley St John, at Oxford, with the deliberate intention of testing the reality of their call of God to the Religious Life. They lived together for a year under the guidance of Father Benson, and on the Feast of St John the Evangelist, 1866, they each took the following vow in one another's presence: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. I . . . promise and vow to Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, before the whole company of heaven, and before you, my Fathers, that I will live in celibacy, poverty and obedience, as one of the Mission Priests of St John the Evangelist unto my life's end. So help me God."

Thus the Society of St John the Evangelist came into existence. Father Benson was at the time Vicar of Cowley, a village two miles from Oxford and extending up to the city of Oxford; Father Grafton was an American priest, who with Father Prescott, the fourth member of the Society to be professed, had gone to England hearing that there was a movement towards the restoration of the Religious Life for priests and, on Dr Pusey's advice, had got into communication with Father Benson; and Father O'Neill had been a master at Eton and had served a curacy under Mr Butler of Wantage.

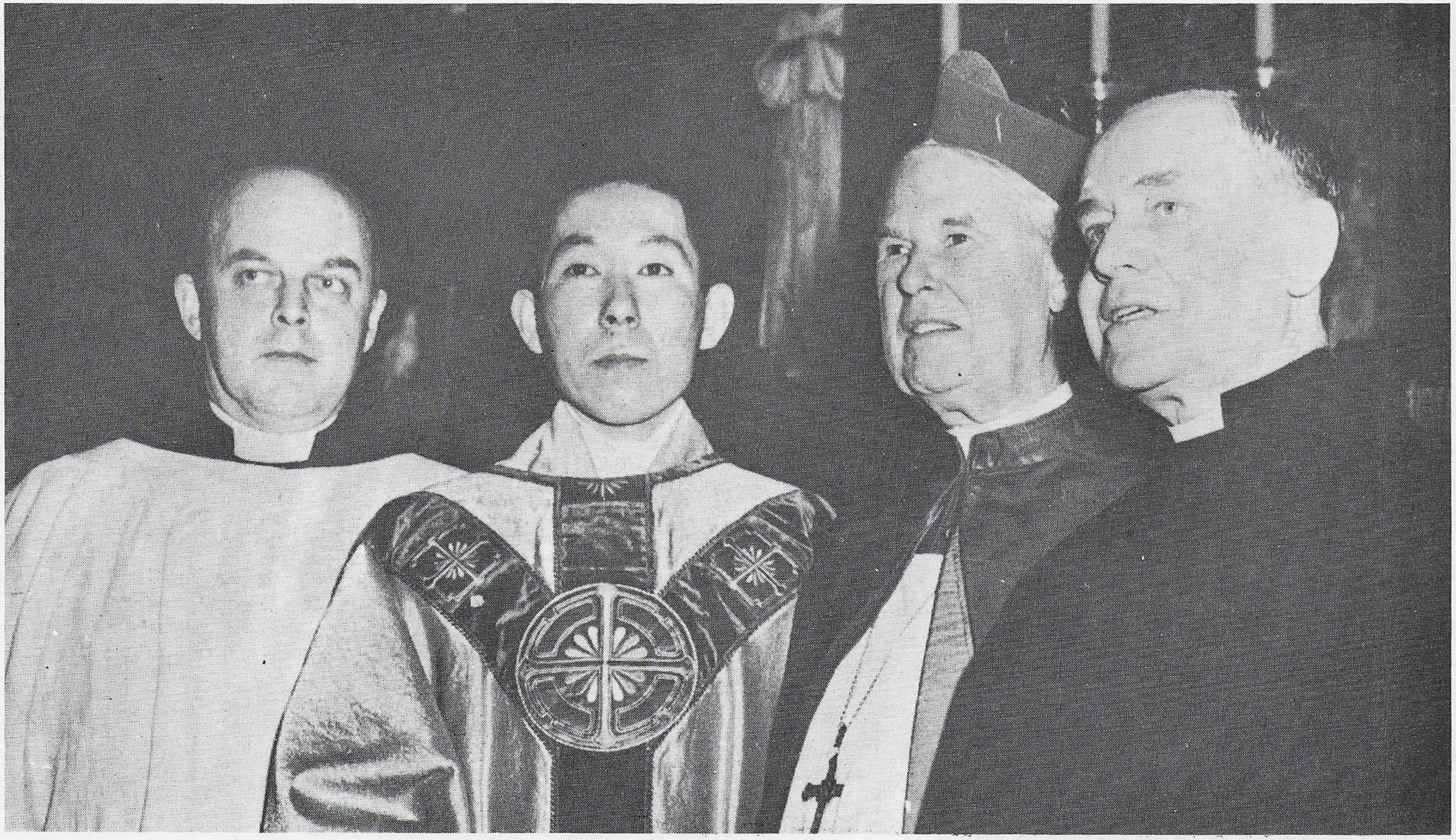
THE GUEST COMMON ROOM — MOTHER HOUSE, OXFORD

It was the first stable movement in the Church of England towards the Religious Life for priests. The re-establishment of the Religious Life for women had already become secure: the great communities of All Saints, of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage, of St John the Baptist, Clewer, and of St Margaret, East Grinstead, with many others, were in existence, and in many cases with the approval and blessing of the diocesan bishops. This had been especially the case in the diocese of Oxford under Bishop Wilberforce, and the movement now begun for priests received from him the same welcome that he had given to the formation of the Sisterhoods at Oxford, Wantage and Clewer.

For some sixteen years Father Benson moulded the Society which he had been called to found. A long preparation had gone before in his own soul. For fifteen years he had been living, in a cottage in his parish of Cowley, a life of self-discipline, in prayer and study and pastoral work. Intensely missionary-hearted, he had planned in 1859 to go to India with a view to the realisation of a hope that later on a devotional college might be founded in which members would live "as much in poverty as possible, and as much orientally in every habit and mode of life as possible," but the Bishop of Oxford was unwilling that he should leave his parish at that time, and he obeyed and waited. "I know well what the apostolic weariness of such a waiting time is. I have had some waiting in my day," he wrote once to Father O'Neill, "but God gives us waiting times that they may be prayer times." Thus when the true call came he was ready, and was enabled to be a true Father Founder.

THE SPIRIT OF THE SOCIETY

A Society truly called of God must drink deep of the spirit of its founder. Father Benson was in no hurry to begin the works abroad that his heart was set on, or to draw up a Constitution too soon. "Do not mind a Mission house having infancy. Infancy is a very sacred thing. Silence is specially dear to God." And in one of his early retreats, in 1870, he warned the Fathers: "We are so apt to wish that Jesus Christ should manifest His power by us, rather than over us; that He should use us as His instruments,



FATHER PEDERSEN, SUPERIOR 1963-

FATHER HARITANI

BISHOP BURTON, SUPERIOR 1924-1939

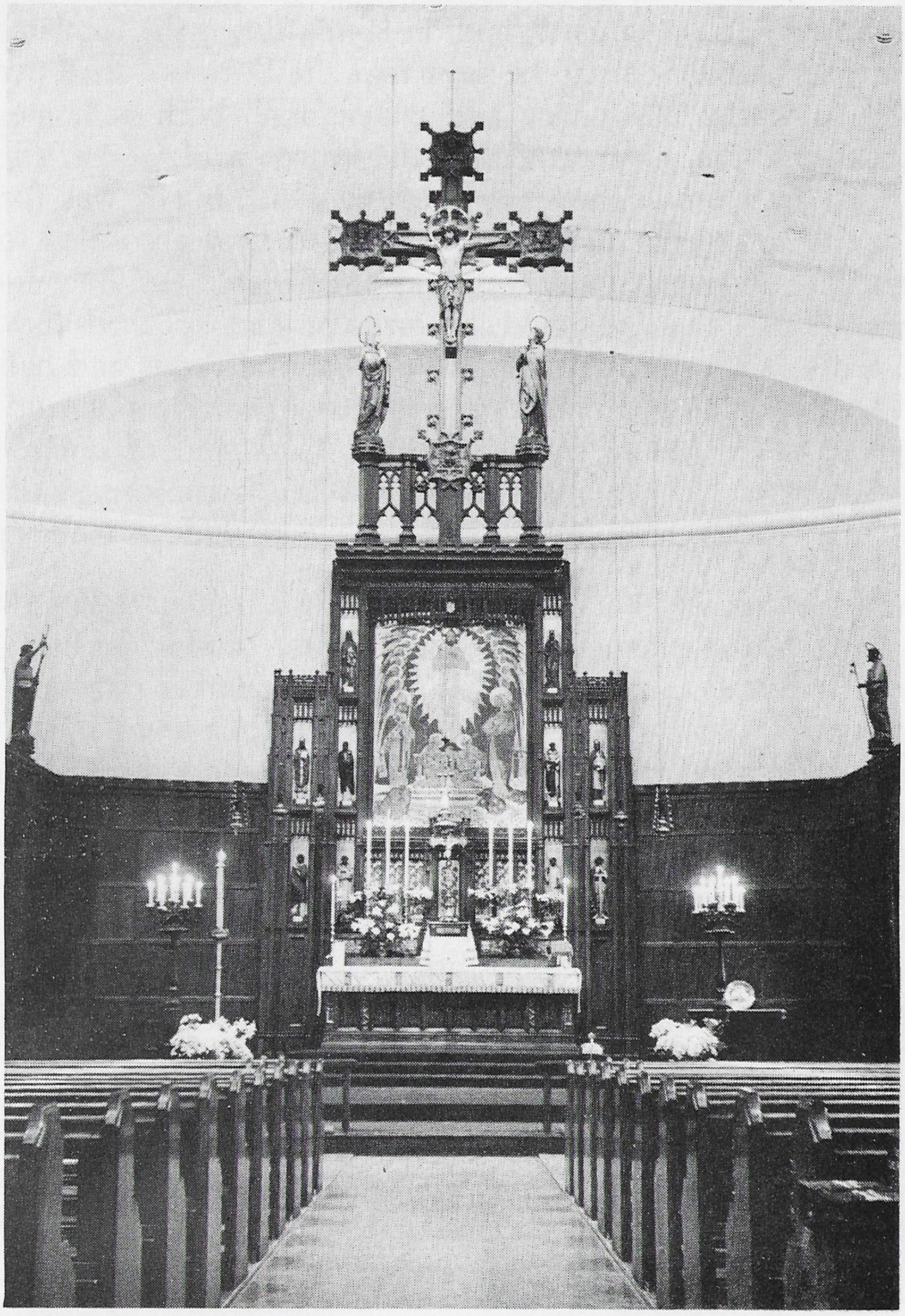
FATHER WILLIAMS, SUPERIOR 1939-1963

rather than rule over us as His servants." He intensely desired the manifestation of Christ's power amongst the heathen, and in nominally Christian England, and he longed for himself and for the Society to be so used; and, in laying down the fundamental principle of the Society, he says that the Society "shall occupy itself in works missionary and educational, both at home and abroad, for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, as God in His good providence may seem to call;" but it was formed "for the cultivation of a life dedicated to God according to the principles of poverty, chastity and obedience," and only by the cultivation of that life could its works be accomplished. It would be a life "in many ways contrary to natural tastes and habits," a life of prayer and hiddenness, a life of mortification and discipline, but a life of intense love of God, and of union with Jesus Christ. "The more perfectly our life is conformed to His, the more really resultful it will be, however hidden from men."

So the first members of the Society were trained to live simply to God. In the summer there was a retreat of four weeks (afterwards reduced to two), and at Christmas another retreat of one week, and in each month there was a day of retreat. Thus they were withdrawn from the world that they might learn of Christ to be made one with Him in His actions, in His sufferings, in His desires, in the fruitful participation of His grace, in the inspiring contemplation of His glory.

Then, in 1884, the Constitution of the Society was formally drawn up and presented to the Bishop of Oxford for his approval. It was a memorable occasion. Bishop Mackarness received the Fathers, then in England, in his chapel at the palace at Cuddesdon, and, accepting the office of Visitor, gave his blessing to the Society collectively and individually, laying his hands on each one present. Each of the Fathers then signed the book containing the Statutes and Rule of Life in his presence.

From that time the Superior-General has been elected triennially, Father Benson resigning the office after the period of his first election in 1887, and being succeeded by Father Page in 1890, by Father Maxwell in 1907, by Father Bull in 1916, by Father O'Brien in 1931, and by Father Dalby in 1949.



CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST
AND MISSION HOUSE, BOSTON

(This was the first church to be served by the Fathers in the United States)

TWO CONGREGATIONS, THEN THREE

At the present time the Society is composed of three congregations, the English, the American, and the Canadian. In a letter addressed to his parishioners "of the New District of Cowley St John on the Opening of the Mission House in Marston Street," and dated October, 1868, the Father Founder includes this significant sentence: "As the parishioners generally know, some of us are Americans, and it is hoped that they will some day return and organize in the western hemisphere a Mission Society like our own." The Americans to whom Father Benson referred were the Rev. Charles C. Grafton (later, the Bishop of Fond du Lac) and the Rev. Oliver S. Prescott. Coming to America in 1870, the Fathers worked in the Church of the Advent, Bowdoin Street, Boston, and later at St Clement's Church, Philadelphia. Since 1882, when a new church was erected for the parish of the Advent in a new neighborhood in Boston, the Fathers of the Society have continued to work at the old church in Bowdoin Street, which they named the Church of St John the Evangelist. For many years it was the centre of the Society's work in America. As time went on it was seen more and more clearly that the life of the Society in this country demanded such a measure of autonomy for the Fathers as would permit them to hold their own Chapter, elect their own Superior, and train their own novices, while retaining the closest bonds of spiritual brotherhood, by means of a common Rule of Life, with their English Brethren. The autonomy sought was finally secured in 1914. The Society in the United States at once began to grow, and in 1921 the profession of the necessary number of Fathers demanded by the statute constituted the Fathers working in this country into an autonomous American Congregation.

Since then the English Congregation consists of the Mother House at Oxford and St Edward's House at Westminster, London, and of the foreign houses at Poona in India, and at Capetown and St. Cuthbert's in South Africa.

The Mother House of the American Congregation, the Monastery of St Mary and St John, is located at 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the neighborhood of Harvard University. At the present time there have been completed the

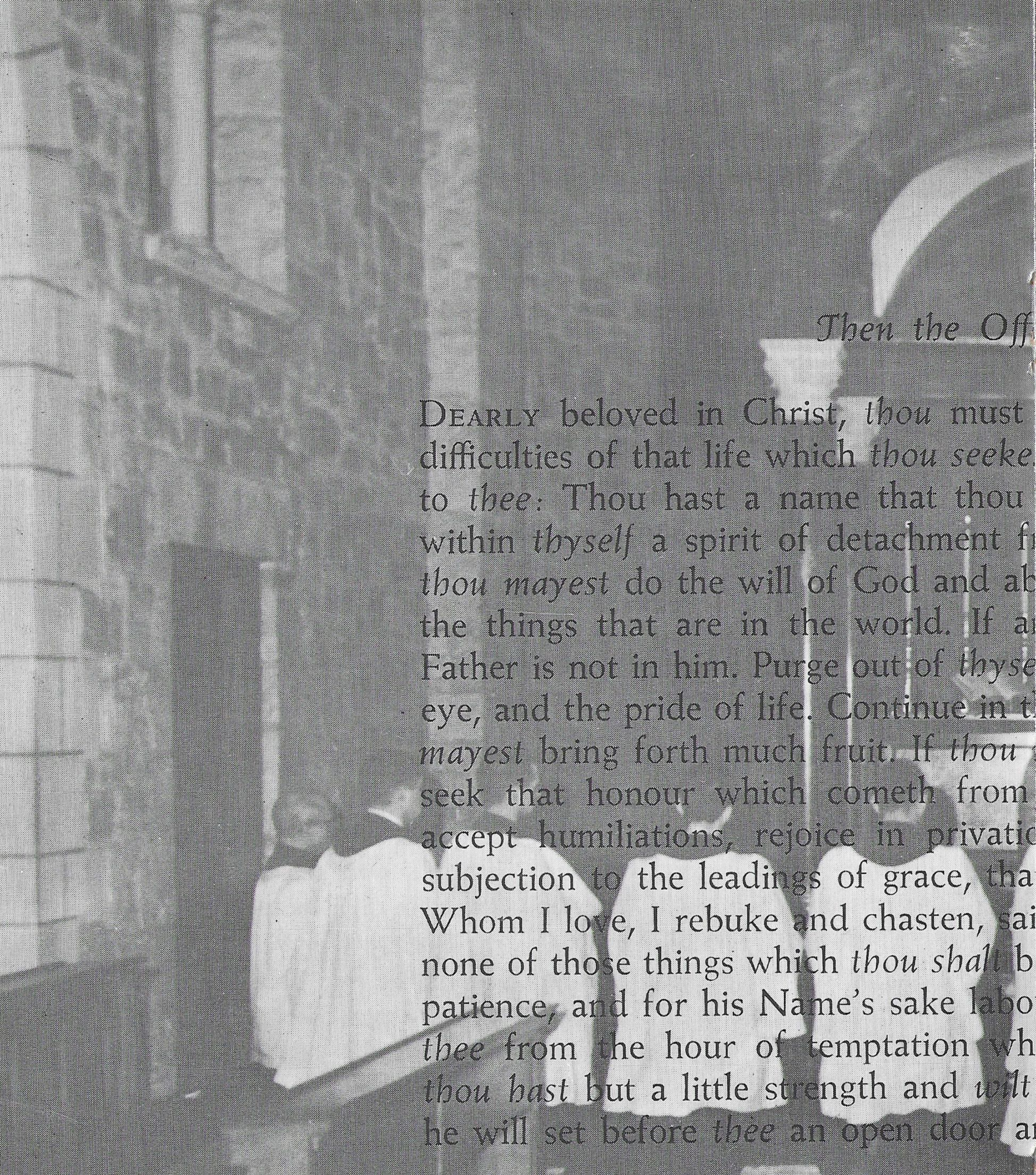
ACOLYTE GUILD — CHURCH OF ST. AUGUSTINE AND ST. MARTIN, ROXBURY

conventual Church of St Mary the Mother of God, the Guest House, and more than half of the Monastery proper. The novitiate of the American Congregation is located in Cambridge, where there is opportunity for prayer and study, free from the distractions of external work. Many associates and friends of the Society are welcomed every year at the Mother House for purposes of devotion and retreat; and, during term time, a number of students from Harvard and other colleges avail themselves of the spiritual privileges of the Monastery and Church.

The Society in England maintains its own conventual Church of St John the Evangelist in Oxford; but it does not undertake parochial work except under special circumstances. In America, however, from the beginning, the Fathers have always had the pastoral care of one or more churches. They have at various times served churches in Boston, Philadelphia, New York City, San Francisco, and Chicago. The Church of St John the Evangelist in Bowdoin Street, Boston, for many years was the center of the Society's work in America and is still looked after by the Society. The Church of St Augustine and St. Martin, which was built by the late Father Field, S.S.J.E., is still carried on as a work of the Society. For several years the Fathers served a group of rural Mission Churches in Aroostook County in the Diocese of Maine.

In 1927, a new Province of the Society was established in Canada, and several Canadian priests who had been professed in the American Congregation returned to work in their own country. The work prospered, and in 1939 this Province became an autonomous Congregation and continues to develop its own life and work. Headquarters are at Bracebridge, Ontario, in the Diocese of Algoma, from which center the Fathers serve many rural mission churches in the beautiful lake district of Muskoka.

In April, 1933, two Japanese priests who had been trained in our Cambridge novitiate and professed as Fathers of the Society, returned to Japan as the first step toward the establishment of a House of the Society in their native land. In December of the same year, at the invitation of the Bishop of North Tokyo (now known as the Diocese of North Kwanto), a branch house of the



Then the Off

DEARLY beloved in Christ, *thou* must
difficulties of that life which *thou seeke*
to *thee*: Thou hast a name that thou
within *thyself* a spirit of detachment f
thou mayest do the will of God and ab
the things that are in the world. If a
Father is not in him. Purge out of *thyse*
eye, and the pride of life. Continue in t
mayest bring forth much fruit. If *thou*
seek that honour which cometh from
accept humiliations, rejoice in privatio
subjection to the leadings of grace, tha
Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten, sai
none of those things which *thou shalt* b
patience, and for his Name's sake labo
thee from the hour of temptation wh
thou hast but a little strength and *wilt*
he will set before *thee* an open door a

Art thou able to drink of his Cup,
Great is his promise to him that overc
my throne, even as I also overcame,
his throne . . .

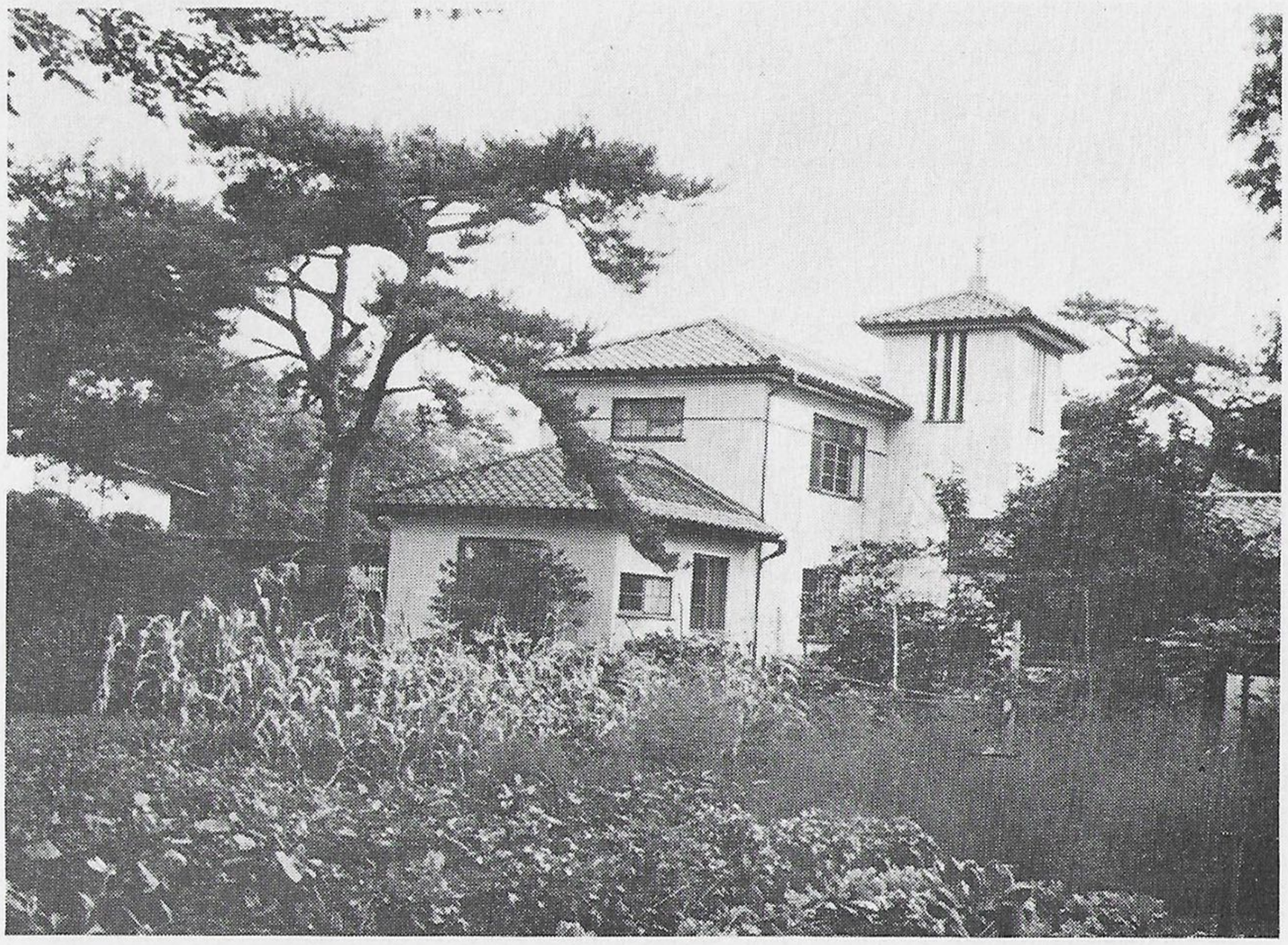
. . . From the Reception and Clothing

ciant shall say:

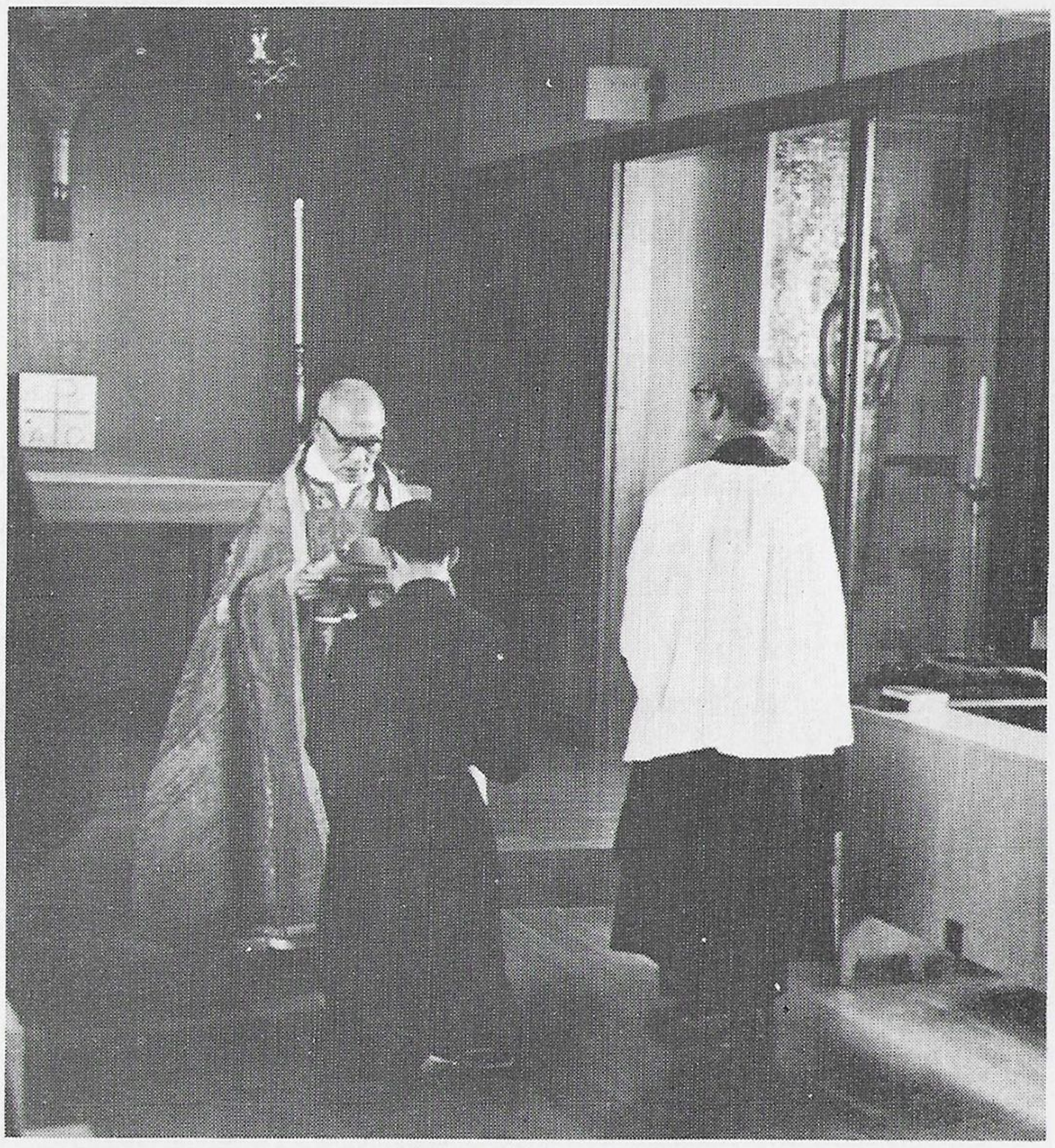
consider well with *thyself* what are the
st. Take heed lest those words be spoken
livest, and art dead. Cultivate therefore
rom the world which passeth away, that
ide for ever. Love not the world, neither
ny man love the world, the love of the
If the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the
he love of him that calleth *thee*, that *thou*
wilt have fellowship with him, *thou* must
God only. Therefore must *thou* gladly
ons, and bring *thy body* and *soul* into
t so the wicked one may not touch *thee*.
ith the Lord Jesus Christ. Fear, therefore,
e called to suffer. Bear all things and have
ur diligently and faint not. He shall keep
ich shall come upon the world. Yea! if
keep his Word and not deny his Name,
nd no man can shut it.

and to be baptized with his Baptism?
pmeth: I will grant him to sit with me in
and am set down with my Father in

of a Novice



SAINT MICHAEL'S MONASTERY, OYAMA, JAPAN

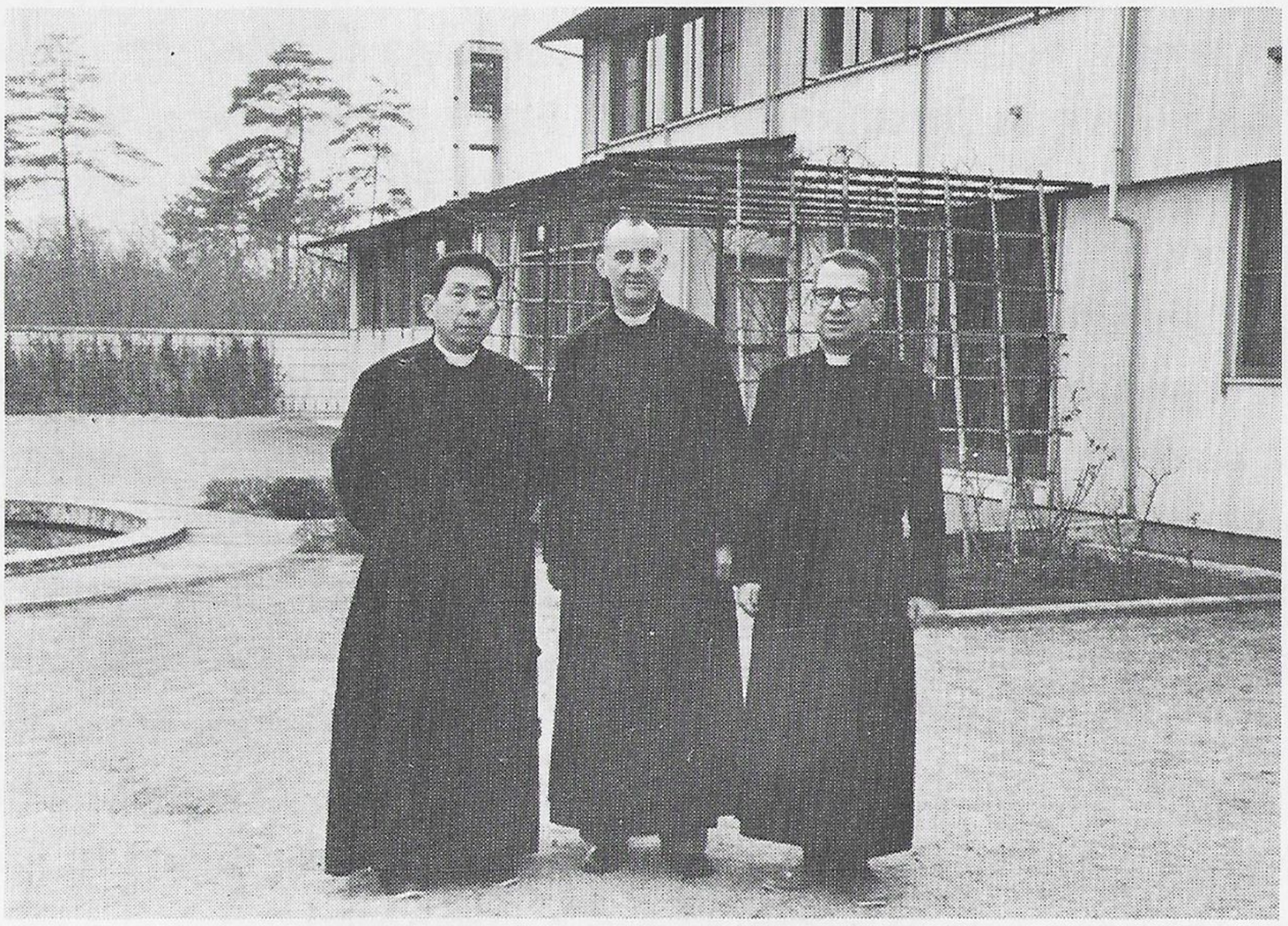


CLOTHING OF A NOVICE

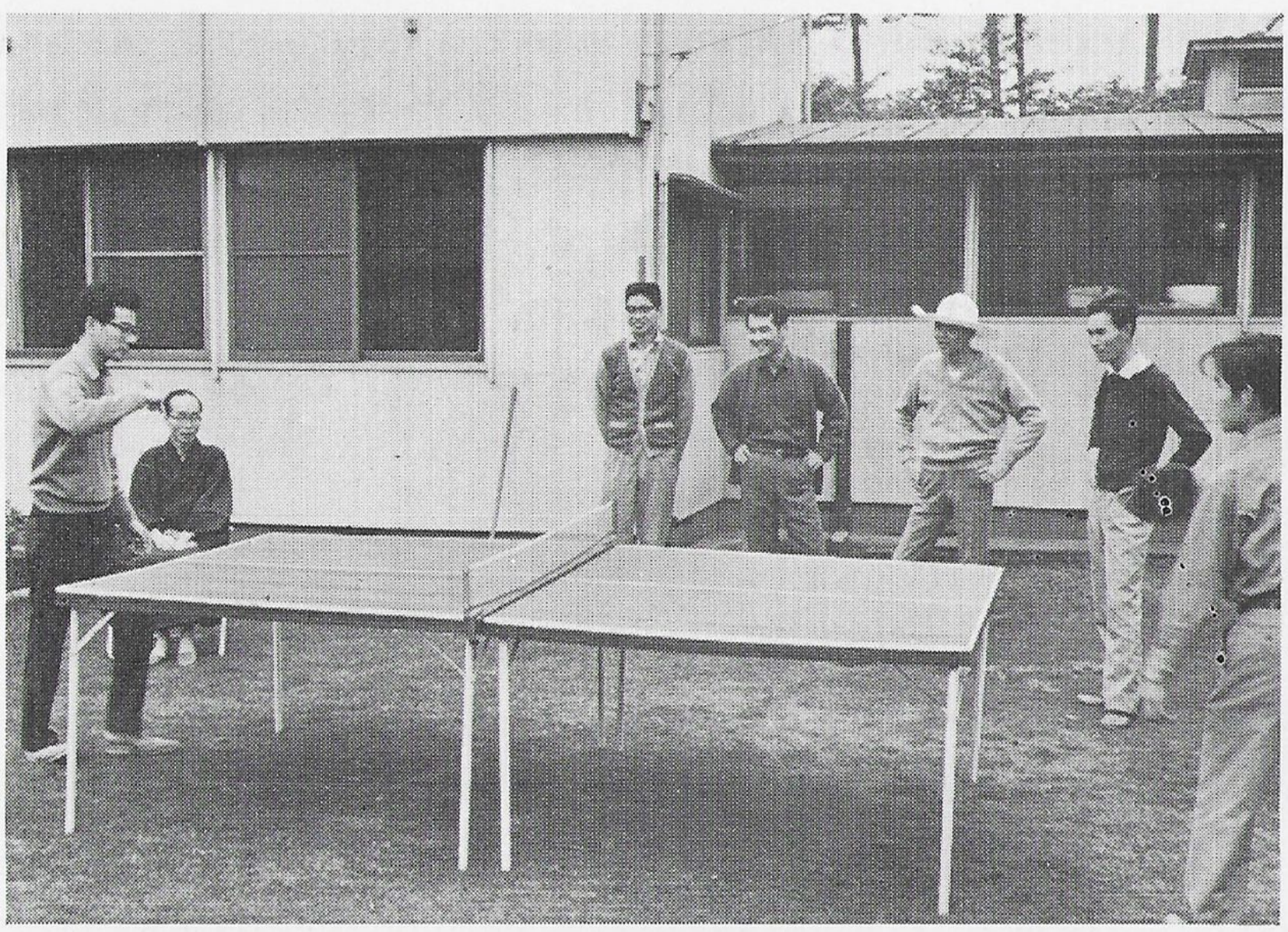
Society was established in that Diocese. The profession of a third Japanese priest in 1934 made possible a further strengthening of the work in Japan, a novitiate was opened there, and with the generous assistance of a gift from the English Congregation, it was possible, in 1939, to build St Michael's Monastery at Oyama, about sixty miles north of Tokyo. The troubles preceding the outbreak of hostilities between the United States and Japan made it necessary, in 1940, to withdraw the American Fathers who had been assisting their Japanese brethren. The war years were a time of great difficulty and real hardship for our Japanese Fathers and Brothers, but they carried on courageously and faithfully. With the coming of peace it is now once more possible to aid the Japanese Province with reinforcements from the Home Province. Father Viall, who was the first to return, was, shortly after his arrival, elected by the Japanese House of Bishops to be Assistant Bishop of Tokyo; and with the consent of the Society was consecrated to that office. The novitiate at Oyama has been reopened. The Fathers are working at Nikko, site of the famous Shinto Shrines, where a flourishing parish has been built up; at Haruna, where a TB Hospital and a native nursing Sisterhood have been established; and at St Paul's University at Tokyo, where one of the Fathers is acting as a Chaplain. The Monastery at Oyama and St John's House, Tokyo, a foundation made several years ago, is much used for Retreats. Missionary opportunities in Japan are great at the present time.

ENTERING THE SOCIETY

Something should be said about the training of candidates for the Society. Candidates should ordinarily be at least twenty-one years of age and must present a certificate of baptism, and medical and psychiatric reports from reputable physicians (or be prepared to undergo thorough examinations by doctors selected by the Society), and one or more recommendations, preferably from the candidate's rector or confessor. They must be free from engagements of debt or of marriage. While lack of education is no



SAINT JOHN'S HOUSE, TOKYO, JAPAN



VISITING STUDENTS

barrier, it should be clearly understood that the decision as to whether a layman will be trained for the priesthood rests entirely with the Father Superior, the Master of the Novices and the Chapter, and cannot be guaranteed in advance.

"As many as receive the Word of God become the sons of God by participation of His grace. It is on this grace of the divine call that we must rely for the accomplishment of any work that we undertake. No one, therefore, can be eligible into our Society unless there be sufficient evidence that he has received a call from God to this life and work; nor is anyone to be rejected because some one particular gift may be wanting to him. God is abundantly able to supply every defect in those to whom His Word comes." *The Rule of Life, Ch. II.*

Those who come to test their vocations in the Religious Life must expect to perform cheerfully whatever duties are assigned to them, to be practised in bearing all kinds of humiliations and to be trained to live simply with the desire of the glory of God. Obedience, humility and fervour in prayer are the certain signs for which we look in every true vocation to the consecrated life of the Evangelical Counsels.

If the candidate's credentials are satisfactory to the Father Superior, he is admitted as a postulant. The period of postulancy lasts at least three months, though it is more often six or nine months. During this time, the candidate has the opportunity to learn something of the life of the Society and of his own fitness for that life. Postulants wear an ordinary choir cassock while in the house but resume their normal dress outside of the enclosure.

If, after the period of postulancy, a postulant feels that he is truly called to this way of life, and his superiors are satisfied that he has a probable vocation, he is given the habit of the Society and becomes a novice. The novitiate lasts for two years, or three, at the discretion of the Superior. At the end of that time, the novice is eligible for election by the Chapter to life vows, if he has reached the age of thirty. Should he be under this age, he is eligible for election to annual vows, which are renewable until such time as he attains the required age.

THE REFECTORY, CAMBRIDGE

LAYMEN IN THE SOCIETY

It has been said that whether or not a layman will be trained for the priesthood depends entirely on the judgment of his superiors. It should be pointed out, however, that the Society of St John the Evangelist is primarily a Society of Mission Priests and that it is customary for us to encourage laymen who come to us in their studies towards this end, provided they show sufficient intellectual aptitude and can present the character requirements necessary for the sacred priesthood. Several of the Fathers of the American Congregation came to the Society when they were laymen and received their training for the priesthood under its direction.

On the other hand, there is a real place in the Society for consecrated laymen, who, for one reason or another, feel no vocation to the priestly life. In each Congregation there are Lay Brothers associated with the Fathers in the same religious dedication, and in the observance of the same rule, the governing body of the Society, the Chapter, being reserved, however, to the Professed Fathers. It is a Society of Priests, but the association of the Lay Brothers in the priestly life and work is real. It calls for a great sense of vocation to a life of sacrifice. It is an act of faith, but it is also an act of love. It is a life of humility, but, therefore, of power. It glorifies God, for it seeks, and finds, Him alone as its sufficient life and joy and reward.

"The Religious Life must come from God. There is a great danger lest we should be anxious to form Religious Societies for the sake of forming them, as a kind of phenomenon of Church Life. The individual will receive the call of God, and will live true to God, whether there be a Society or not. The great matter for us is to cultivate the spark of the Religious life within ourselves till it becomes a flame. Then it will make itself felt."

"Detachment, obedience, love, are all that a postulant need bring in order to secure success in a Religious Vocation." So our Father Founder taught. As he taught, he lived, and as he lived, he died, in prayer and aspiration, on January 14th, 1915, in the ninety-first year of his age.

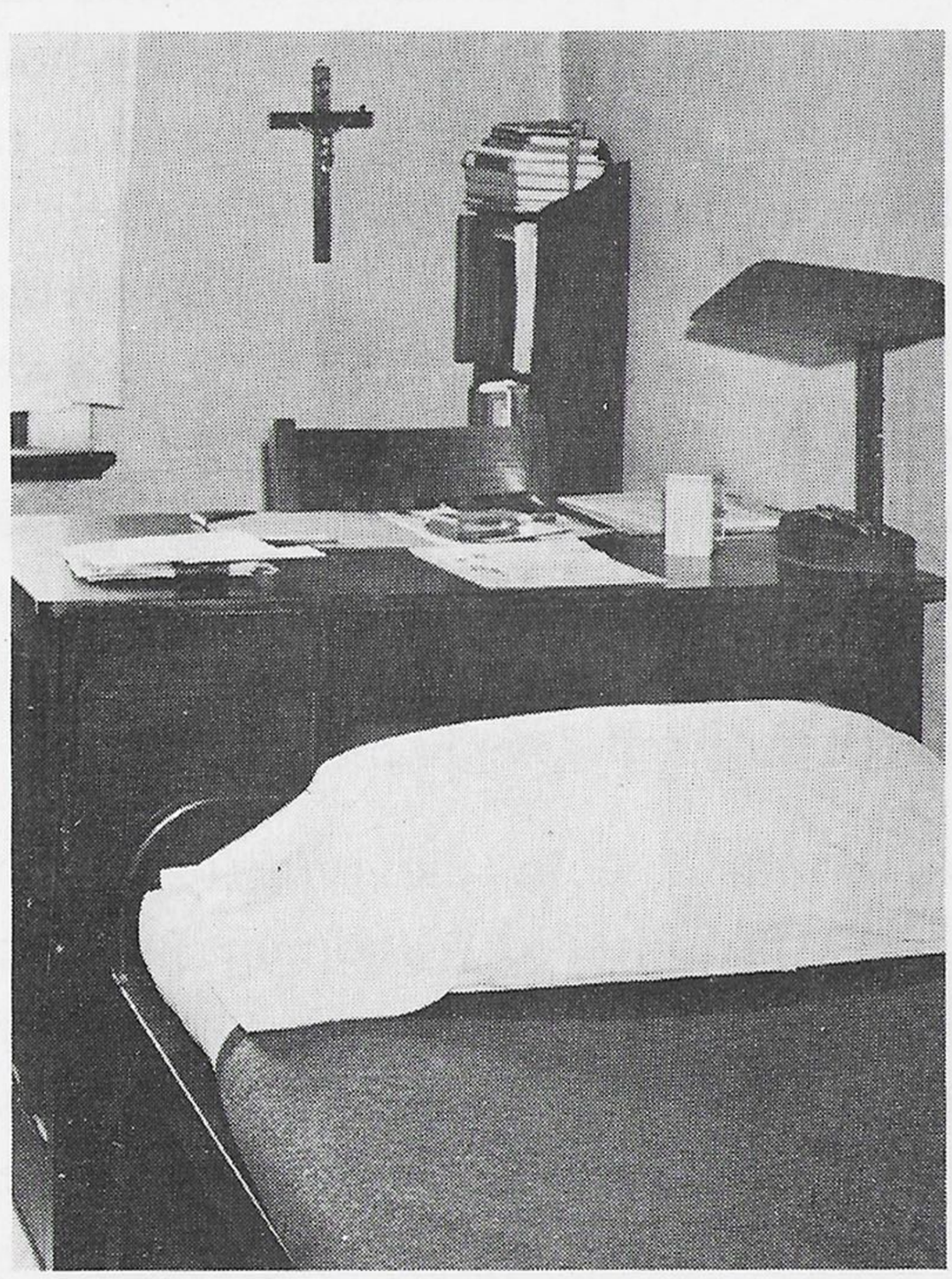
A FATHER ON A CHILDREN'S MISSION

THE MONASTERY DAY

Normally there are in residence at the Mother House the Father Superior, the Father Assistant, the Father Deputy Assistant Superior, the Master of the Novices, some professed Fathers and Brothers, and the novices and postulants. In addition, there will frequently be a number of guests who have come for purposes of retreat or devotion. The members of the Community arise at 5:45 a.m. Matins, Lauds, Prime are said at half-past six. After that the priests offer the Holy Sacrifice, while some of the Fathers go out to say Mass at the churches and convents to which we minister. There is a daily public Mass at half-past seven. This is attended by the Community, students, guests, and other friends of the Community.

Breakfast is at a quarter-past eight, followed by a second public Mass at nine, for the convenience of students and others. The house is quiet from nine to ten, for this is the hour set apart for meditation and mental prayer. Terce is recited at ten o'clock, and after this the brethren betake themselves to their various occupations; some are busy with mop and broom, giving the house its daily cleaning, others are engaged in study, answering letters, or attending to such pastoral business as may turn up. The work of the morning is for the most part accomplished in silence, which, except on Sundays and great feasts, is kept until noon. At half-past twelve we again meet in the Church for Sext, followed by a period of self-examination.

Lunch is served at one in the refectory. At two, None is recited in the Church, followed by community intercessions. The Novices are then assigned to various tasks, frequently to outside work, if the weather permits. The office of Vespers is sung at six, followed by supper at six-thirty. Immediately after supper, the professed members of the Community assemble in the Common Room for "formal recreation," at which the Father Superior presides. Interesting letters are sometimes read, or there may be general conversation on topics of common interest.



Go forth from your cell, whether it be to work, or teach, or to visit, with a consciousness that you are going forth from the house where God dwells with you, and that He goes forth along with you to your external occupation. (*From the Rule of Life*)

At half-past seven, the silence again begins, with the exceptions noted above. The novices go to their cells where they are assigned books for study; the professed fathers give their attention to pastoral work or correspondence, or the preparation of sermons and missions. Compline closes the day at nine o'clock and the stillness of the greater silence rests over the monastery till it is time to rise again for early morning prayers.

Such is the normal course of things during the week. But on Saturday afternoon, the regular schedule is suspended and there is opportunity for the brethren to go walking together, or visit some of the many interesting places within easy distance. On Sunday morning, those who have no outside preaching engagements usually attend High Mass at St John's Church in Boston. Sunday afternoon and evening are more or less free for letter-writing, or visiting, or other congenial occupations.

A FINAL WORD

"In the beginning was the Word, who, being Himself one with God by indissoluble unity of life, called into existence the whole universe of creation in accordance with the will of the Father; and the Word of God, having become incarnate for our salvation, sanctified His humanity by the discipline of a life suffering in obedience to God, in order that He might bring the fallen world back again to be sanctified through the Truth.

"It is the object of the Society of St John the Evangelist, in adoration of this divine mystery, to seek that sanctification, to which God in His mercy calls us, and in so doing to seek, as far as God may permit, to be instrumental in bringing others to be partakers of the same sanctification."

The ministry to souls in parish work, retreats, confessions, missions, occasional sermons, spiritual correspondence, and in helping other Religious Communities, occupies and fills the time that the Fathers can give for the service of the Church. For themselves, their true work — the true *Opus Dei* — remains the Divine Office and the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar, with all that it involves of study, of self-discipline and self-oblation.

It is always to be remembered that the external activity of the Mission Priest draws its strength from the life of prayer and regular devotion lived in the houses of the Society; and that this, in turn, depends in no small degree on you, our friends, living in the world, who of your charity bring our work and our needs daily before the throne of God in prayer. Your prayers, your sympathy, your alms — but, above all, your prayers — are needed that we may be true to our vocation and faithfully do what lies in us towards bringing in the Kingdom of God and of His Christ.

GENERAL INFORMATION

CORRESPONDENCE for the FATHER SUPERIOR should be addressed to 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Mass.

Donations and subscriptions for the works of the Society are thankfully received. Those designated for any work in the Home Province, or for the Province of Japan, should be sent directly to the REVEREND FATHER SUPERIOR, 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Mass.

The Cable Address of the Society in America is: EVANGELIST, BOSTON.

Guests are welcomed at our several Houses for purposes of devotion and retreat. In order to assure prompt attention, application should be addressed to the GUESTMASTER, and not to individual Fathers, or Brothers.

PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST

COWLEY. The illustrated quarterly magazine of the American Congregation of the Society of St John the Evangelist. COWLEY contains articles by various writers dealing with subjects bearing on the Religious Life generally, and keeps associates and friends in touch with the life and work of the American Congregation in its several Houses. *Single copies, 25 cents, annual subscription, $1.*

THE COWLEY EVANGELIST. The monthly paper of the English Congregation of the Society of St John the Evangelist. Devoted to papers and letters dealing chiefly with the missionary work of the Fathers in India and South Africa. *Annual subscription, $1.*

MITSUKAI *(The Messenger)*. A small illustrated leaflet published semi-annually, with news of the Province of Japan, and of the work of the Society in Japan. No fixed subscription price, but an offering of $1 or more, for our work in Japan, would be appreciated.

All the above may be obtained from the SECRETARY OF PUBLICATIONS, 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF ST JOHN

THE Fellowship has for its object the binding into one association of work and prayer those who, while they give of their substance and their energy for the furtherance of the life and work of the Society of St John the Evangelist, desire to have their part in the prayers and other good works that are offered in the Society to Almighty God. The Fellowship is open to the laity, both men and women. The obligations are very simple, consisting mainly of daily prayers for the Society and its works; a regular annual contribution to the Society; and the reception of Holy Communion, with intention for the Society, on the patronal feast of St John *ante Portam Latinam* (May 6), or within the octave.

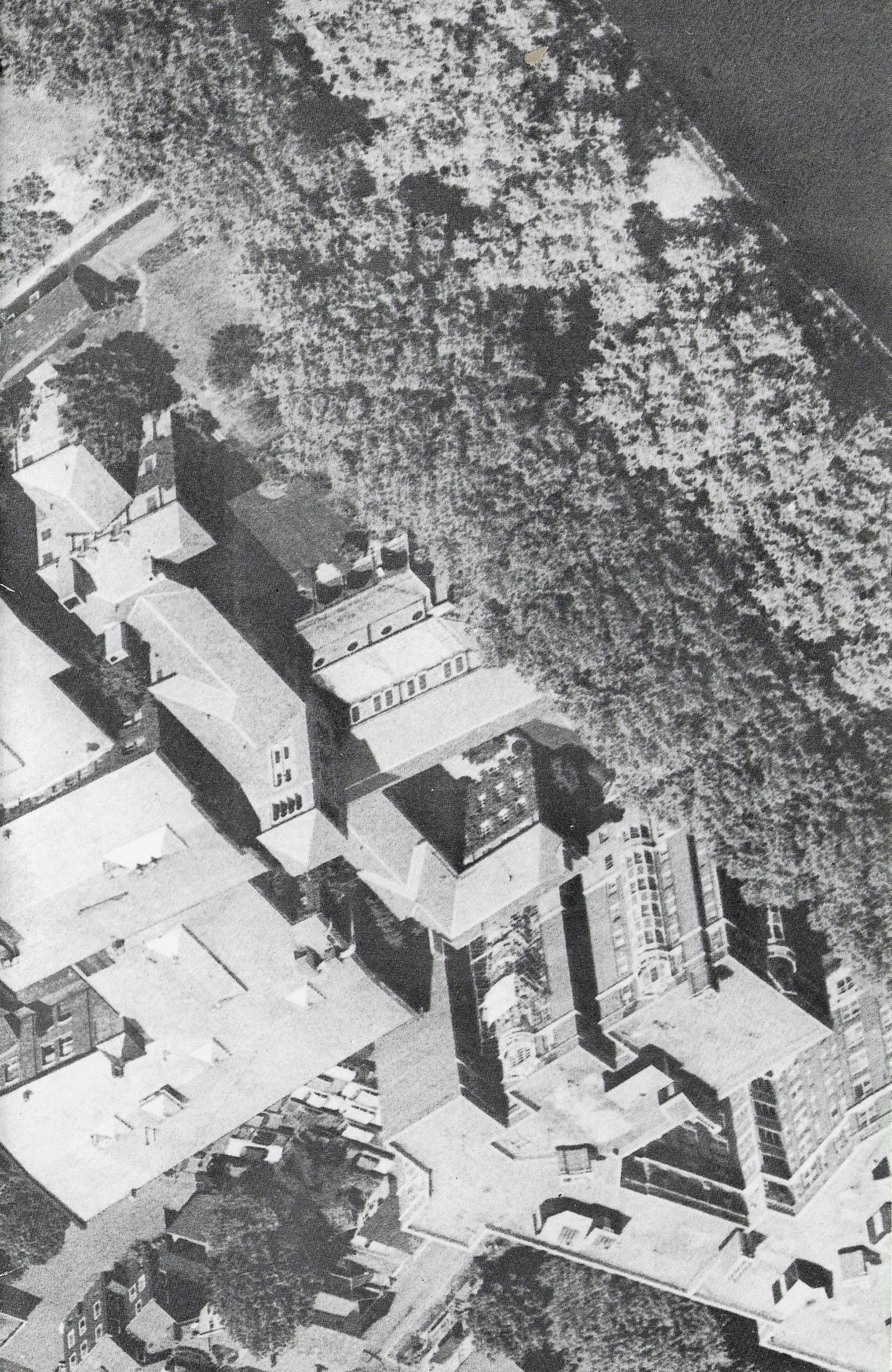
Further information may be obtained from the Warden General of the Fellowship of St John, 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Mass.

ASSOCIATES S.S.J.E.

PRIESTS, and such laymen as desire to keep a rule of stricter obligations than that of the Fellowship, are admitted as Associates of the Society of St John the Evangelist, after a short period of probation. The particulars of membership may be obtained upon application to the REVEREND FATHER SUPERIOR, S.S.J.E., 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Mass., or to any Provincial Superior of the Society.

OBLATES OF THE SOCIETY

NOT all who hear and would willingly accept the call to God to a life of complete dedication are free from obligations and unbreakable ties. Some who are thus prevented from entering the Religious State are desirous of conforming their lives as closely as possible to the life of the Religious. For such persons who are celibates and feel drawn to our Society there is provided the Rule of the Oblates of the Incarnate Word. Inquiries should be addressed to THE REVEREND FATHER SUPERIOR, S.S.J.E., 980 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

COVER: THE PROCESSION AFTER VESPERS

AERIAL VIEW OF THE MONASTERY